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COVER: Detail of a Turkish Carpet, Northwest Anatolia, late 16th or 17th century, Textile Museum 1976.10.1. Purchase, Arthur D. Jenkins Gift Fund and Proceeds from the Sale of Art. (See Figure 1 in "A Turkish Carpet with Spots and Stripes" by Louise W. Mackie.) Transparency by Raymond L. Schwartz.

The views expressed by the authors are their own; they do not necessarily reflect those of the Textile Museum.

BOOK REVIEW

KILIM VE DÜZ DOKUMA YAYGILAR

by **Belkis Acar**. Istanbul, 1975. 63 pages, 59 color plates, 27 black and white drawings. Price 100 Turkish lira.

The title means *Kilim and Flat-woven Covers*. The author, Belkis Acar, is the curator of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque Rug Museum. The mosque is better known to Westerners as the "Blue Mosque." In the English foreword May H. Beattie writes:

"Belkis Acar's enthusiasm for the flat-woven rugs of Anatolia is now well known and her studies should provide that first-hand information about techniques, terms and provenance which is so much needed by the ever increasing number of collectors. What is even more important is that reports of such field work preserve for posterity practical information about one of the age-old crafts of Anatolia."

The attractions of the book are two-fold: first Mrs. Acar's discussion of weaving techniques of eastern Turkish flat-weaves from areas little known and seldom visited by Westerners, and secondly the excellent drawings and good color plates.

Mrs. Acar is at her best when she describes the weavings of the Turkish villages and nomadic tribes. She has a deep understanding of the great folk art in the weavings of Anatolia, and explains simply and with great beauty the very essences of the weavings:

"The Turkish village or nomadic weaver weaves the motifs and designs that she has learned from the elder members of her family. She knows them by heart. She may also use those designs she has seen in other flat-weaves. She follows no master design except that in her own head. The motifs and designs she adjusts to fit the dimension of her weaving. She uses the colors she has available. The weavings are never perfectly symmetrical. But while the details never match, she knows how to give the feel of perfect balance. At times she seems to stray absent-mindedly from her original intentions and fills the extra space with whatever designs come to her mind.

"Imagine, if you can, the difficulties faced by the nomadic weaver when the family gathers tent and loom and moves to the next location. If she uses up all the old dye she may find that the new location has different plants for making the dye. She does not leave the weaving half finished. Instead she makes fresh dyes with fresh mordants knowing full well that the color of the yarn will be different. As the designs unfold she must, with the eye of an artist, balance the new colors against the old. And in so doing she creates a work of art."

The country of Turkey covers a wide range of geographical features and climatic conditions. Through the centuries it has been the homeland of many different cultures and ethnic groups; therefore Turkish flat-weaves show a great variety of techniques and designs. Ancient motifs undoubtedly once had symbolical significance. But over the years their symbolism has been lost and they have become mere designs. Some motifs have changed over the years, others have come down nearly unchanged in design from the day when they did have symbolic meaning. Mrs. Acar says that today if one asks a village or nomad weaver to explain the symbolism of the design she is weaving, she will pause for a long moment before answering or she may ask a bystander the same question. In either case, the answer will not be the traditional symbolism of the design but rather what the design reminds the people of now. In the motif they may see a *yayla yolu* (mountain path) or a *çengelcik* (little hook) or a *yar yare küstü* (lovers' quarrel) or *ayrik bacak* (spraddled legs) or perhaps *kurt izi* (wolf tracks).

When the Oğuz Turks, for example, swept into Anatolia in the 10th and 11th centuries they brought with them the symbolic motifs of Central Asia. They added to them the designs of the civilizations in Anatolia with which they came in contact.

A number of the flat weaves illustrated (Plate 3) were woven by the Yuruks, a name which comes from the Turkish verb "to walk". In Turkey it distinguished the true nomads from people who have settled or, at least, are semi-settled in villages. (In many villages some families still take the sheep to the mountains in the spring and live in mountain camps during the summer grazing season.) The Yur-

uks say of themselves that they are "one who walks, one who does not stay in one place, one who migrates, one who is a nomad," and "we are the essence of the Turks." However, since many are increasingly settling down throughout the country, it is not uncommon now to find eastern Anatolian designs being woven in southern and western Turkey. Mrs. Acar fails to give the ethnic background of the Yuruks. Strictly speaking they could be the nomadic tribes of any group: Turks, Turkoman, Afsharis, or Kurds. All of these groups were at least once nomadic in eastern Turkey.

The author says that if we want to investigate this art of weaving—which now is on the verge of extinction—we must go to the looms and the weavers. But we must also project ourselves into the past and study the social and economic changes that have come to the villagers and the tribes. Customs have been modified. Greater communications have not only touched their lives but brought pictures of new rug patterns different from those of the old days.

Modern goods have replaced the old. Beautiful hand-woven saddlebags and carrying sacks have given way to machine-made products. Plastic belts and nylon ropes have replaced the colorful straps once made by tablet weaving. Cradles of *soumak* weaving have been replaced by foam rubber and iron beds. Formerly young girls learning to weave captured their inspiration for designs from the world around them: from flowers, vines and trees; from birds, sheep, gazelles, wolves, dogs, camels and snakes; from common household objects such as combs, beads, pitchers and lamps. In the ancient myths told by their grandmothers they learned about phoenixes and dragons and double-headed eagles. But now their world is made up of asphalt roads, telephone poles, automobiles and jet planes. The tales told by their grandmothers have been replaced by the romantic stories they read of the lives of movie queens and television stars. They are trapped between the cultures of the ancient East and the modern West. Mrs. Acar calls for art historians, artists and ethnographers to document the old and the new cultures and their effect on the work of the weavers. It must be done soon because weaving is fast becoming a dead art.

On the same loom a weaver can weave a

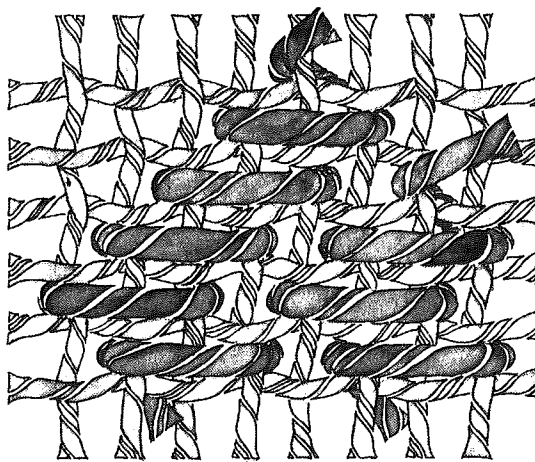


Fig. 1 *Cicim* weaving. Pattern wefts float over 3 warps (after Drawing 14).

pile rug, a *kilim*, a *cicim*, a *zili*, or a *soumak*. The author explains that the same types of woven fabrics are often given different names. She uses one of the most authentic nomenclatures of woven fabrics written by Irene Emery, in *The Primary Structures of Fabrics*, published by the Textile Museum in 1966. In this discussion the reviewer has used the same terms given in the author's notes. The excellent drawings in the book of the various techniques make the terminology self-explanatory even though somewhat unfamiliar Turkish names are used for some of them.

Either horizontal or vertical looms can be used to make the flat-weaves. Both types are illustrated and described in Plates 14-20. The warps of most Turkish rugs are 2 Z-ply and S-spun woolen yarns or occasionally goat or camel hair. Recently cotton has increasingly replaced the woolen warps. The thickness of the warp threads used depends upon the thickness planned for the rug to be woven. A heavy rug may have thick, loosely spun yarns for the warp. A thin rug will have fine, tightly spun warp (Plate 16).

Kilims are the best known of the flat-weaves. They are woven throughout the Middle East. The term *kilim* seems to have first appeared in Turkish writings of the early 13th century. *Kilim* apparently spread to other countries where various spellings include "gilims," "kylyms" and "shilims," (not to

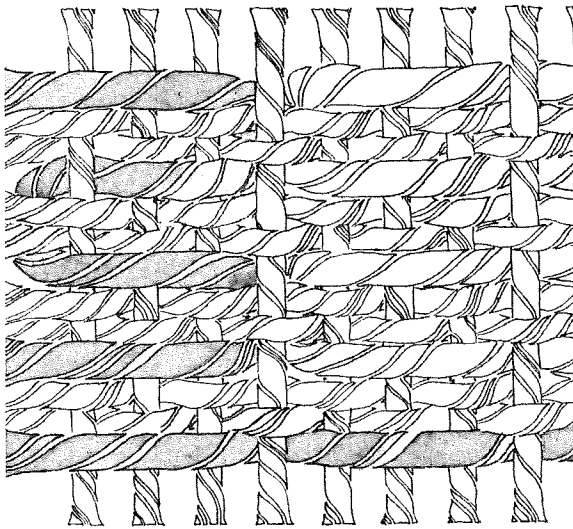


Fig. 2 Zili weaving with 3/1 span-floats (after Drawing 17).

mention “kelims,” “killims,” etc.) An old Ottoman proverb of the 14th century warns that one should “leave the kilim in the water.” (It is best to leave a bad situation unresolved.)

Weavers use several techniques in weaving kilims, a term used loosely to incorporate all flat-woven pieces without pile. More precisely, a *kilim* is a weft-faced plain weave which is also known as tapestry weave. (Anthony N. Landreau gave a detailed account of weaving a *kilim* in eastern Turkey in his essay “Kurdish Kilim Weaving in the Van-Hakkari District of Eastern Turkey” in the 1973 issue of the *Textile Museum Journal*.)

The most common weft-faced *kilims* in Turkey are “slit-tapestry” (Drawing 4 and Plates 22-26). Various designs are woven by interlacing each colored weft back and forth across the warps to form the desired areas of color. A slit develops between the adjacent areas of different colors. These slit-tapestry kilims are made in Turkey for large floor coverings, prayer rugs, saddlebags, grain sacks, and floor and divan pillows.

The author discusses how the slits can be closed while weaving, illustrated by very clear drawings and color details of woven pieces. These methods include single and double interlocking (Drawings 5 and 6), wrapping (Drawings 7 and two Plates numbered 29) and *soumak* wrapping (Drawing 11).

She also illustrates a wrapping used to

outline color areas where the yarns can go in almost any direction to outline a curvilinear form (Drawing 12, Plate 32). Such outlining is rare, but the author reports that she has found it practiced in towns in the Konya area and the nearby villages of Akvira, Çumra, Derbent, Mesudiye and Kavak.

Another method to avoid the slits is by dovetailing the adjacent wefts of two different colors around the same single warp (Drawing 10). This technique allows the weaver to make curvilinear designs, but it was hardly ever practiced in Turkey. Rare examples are found in the Great Mosque in Divriği (Plate 28) and in the Mevlana Museum in Konya.

Cicims (Fig. 1) are made by discontinuous weft floats, correctly called brocading, on a balanced plain weave or weft-faced plain weave ground, usually monochrome in color. (Drawings 13, 14 and Plate 34) (*Cicim* is pronounced *jijim* as it is frequently spelled in English.) The areas of solid color in a *cicim* are quite limited. The brocading pattern wefts normally pass over only a few warps at a time—generally two or three—in order to avoid long floats without anchorage. The designs are more or less outlines, composed of narrow linear shapes, as can be done by embroidery, making them look as if they were done by needlework (Plates 35-37, 39 and 40).

Cicims with a balanced plain weave ground are often made in narrow bands about a foot wide. They are sewn together for draperies and floor coverings. (The reviewer has seen them also used in homes for covering the night's bedding.)

Cicims with a weft-faced plain weave ground are quite thick and heavy (Plate 39). They are used for saddlebags, floor pillows, divan cushions and floor coverings. The Kurdish tribes in southeastern Anatolia around the areas of Malatya, Diyarbakir and Gaziantep combine horizontal bands of *cicim* with bands of solid color (Plate 40). These bands are sewn together, frequently to decorate the face of grain sacks. The weavers may insert tassels into the weaving for decoration or blue beads to “ward off the evil eye.”

The reviewer must point out that such words as *cicim* have been objected to by some authorities. It lacks such specific description as “weft-float brocading on a balanced plain or weft-float plain weave ground.” But the word is widely used and understood in Turkey

and among scholars and collectors knowledgeable of Turkish weavings. What it may lack in exact description, it more than makes up for in shortness and convenience.

Zili is the Turkish name for another type of weft-float flat weave (Drawings 17 and 18). The weft-floats usually extend from selvage to selvage and therefore are continuous brocading wefts. The pattern weft may go over three warps and under one (Fig. 2) or over three and under three. The pattern wefts may go over and under the same warps to form the design or they may move sideways which gives a diagonal appearance. In either case they look woven and it is easy to spot that they were made on a loom (Plates 41-44).

Zili or *sili* may be a Turkish dialect word. As far as is known, it is not the name of a place. (There is a Turkish town south of Amasya called Zile.) It certainly has nothing to do with the Caucasian place name, Sille, given to flat weaves—generally *soumak*—with repeated S-shaped dragon designs.

Zili are less common than the *cicim* even though weavers say *zili* are easier to weave. Since the design is made up of repeated adjacent motifs, it is easier for the weaver to keep count of her place in the design. But since the entire background is covered with weft-floats *zili* uses much more wool. *Zili* are still made in western and southern Anatolia and in the region of Konya by the Yuruks and Turkoman who have settled in villages. (The reviewer has found them also in east-central Turkey.) The author says the designs generally show Turkoman influence.

Soumak flat weaves are made by weft wrapping, over four warps, back under two warps, forward again over four warps and so on. A regular weft is usually inserted after each row of wrapping. The yarn may be wrapped in the same direction in every row to make "plain" *soumak* (Drawings 19, 24 and Plate 50) or it may be wrapped in the opposite direction in every other row, forming a herringbone effect, to make "countered" *soumak* (Drawing 20 and Plate 46 show both "plain" and "countered" *soumak*).

"Plain" and "countered" *soumaks* are also woven without a row of weft between each row of weft wrapping in some areas, such as Malatya, Gaziantep, Diyarbakir and Elazığ in southeastern Turkey (Drawings 21, 23 and Plate 49). This is sometimes referred to as "stocking weave." In parts of eastern Turkey, the wrapping is made around staggered pairs of warps which gives the weave a distinct diagonal appearance (Drawing 25).

In spite of the fact that the book is written in Turkish, it is a valuable addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in Turkish flat weaves. The drawings and plates make it worth while. Belkis Acar has made an important contribution to the literature of Turkish weavings.

In conjunction with this Review, English translations of the Turkish captions have been prepared by Pinar Arcan, Bookshop Manager at the Textile Museum. The mimeograph pages are available in the Textile Museum Bookshop.

—RALPH S. YOHE

RALPH S. YOHE, *Trustee of the Textile Museum since 1969, is a rug collector, lecturer, and scholar with impressive knowledge of the Near East. Mr. Yohe has written numerous articles during extensive travels in Europe and the Middle East for farm magazines and newspapers in the United States and Canada. At present he is in charge of editorial research for the Wisconsin Agriculturist of which he has been editor since 1957. Being an enthusiastic supporter of the Textile Museum's programs, he generously lends his rugs and supplementary material to the Museum's exhibitions and frequently presents illustrated lectures to its Associates.*